

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8613

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 358

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SP

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER OREJA SPEAKS ON BASQUE PROBLEM

1. WHEN I SAW FONMIN OREJA JANUARY 17, I ASKED HIM
IF HE COULD GIVE ME HIS OWN EVALUATION OF HOW THE
GOVERNMENT WOULD HANDLE THE BASQUE PROBLEM WHICH WAS
SHOWING SIGNS OF FURTHER DETERIORATION. AS OREJA IS
A BASQUE HIMSELF AND IS WELL REGARDED BY THE BASQUES,
I THOUGH HIS VIEWS WOULD BE OF PARTICULAR INTEREST.

2. OREJA TOLD ME THAT IN HIS VIEW THE SITUATION HAD
REACHED SUCH A LOW POINT THAT IT HARDLY COULD GET ANY
WORSE. THEREFORE, HE CONCLUDED THAT IT WOULD BEGIN
TO SHOW SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT. HE, HIMSELF, WAS IN VERY
CLOSE TOUCH WITH VARIOUS LEADERS IN THE FOUR BASQUE
PROVINCES AND HAD SPENT MOST OF HIS WEEKEND ON THE
TELEPHONE WITH BASQUE LEADERS TO TRY TO DAMPEN DOWN THE
SITUATION. HE ACTED AS CONDIUT BECAUSE IN SOME
PROVINCES, NOTABLY GUIPUZCOA, BASQUE LEADERS WOULD
NOT TALK WITH THE CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

3. OREJA SAID THAT BEGINNING TOMORROW THE GOVERNMENT
WOULD TAKE A SERIES OF MEASURES TO TRY TO IMPROVE THE
SITUATION. THE FIRST MEASURE WOULD BE TO AUTHORIZE THE
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USE OF THE BASQUE FLAG IN THE FOUR PROVINCES. THIS
WOULD THEN BE FOLLOWED BY MEASURES TO UPGRADE THE USE
OF THE BASQUE LANGUAGE (WHICH, HOWEVER, WOULD NOT
REACH THE LEVEL OF WHAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD AGREED TO
IN CATALUNIA, BUT IT WOULD BE AN IMPROVEMENT). THE
GOVERNMENT WOULD ALSO PROVIDE SUBSIDIES FOR BASQUE
SCHOOLS WHICH, AT THE PRESENT TIME, ARE PAID FOR

PRIVATELY. (THIS HAS BEEN ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL ISSUES ABOUT WHICH BASQUE NATIONAL LEADERS HAVE FELT STRONGLY.)

4. ON THE ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL, OREJA SAID IN CONFIDENCE THAT, IT WAS PLANNED TO CHANGE MOST OF THE CIVIL GOVERNORS IN THE BASQUE PROVINCES IN AN ATTEMPT TO BRING MEN IN WHO HAD SOME REAL UNDERSTANDING OF BASQUE ISSUES AND MIGHT BE BETTER ABLE THAN THE PRESENT ONES TO ESTABLISH A DIALOGUE. EFFORTS WOULD ALSO BE MADE TO RE-ESTABLISH THE "JUNTAS GENERALES" WHICH WOULD BE THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES IN CERTAIN OF THE BASQUE PROVINCES.

5. OREJA SAID THAT THOUGHT WAS BEING GIVEN TO THE APPOINTMENT OF A QUOTE GOVERNOR GENERAL UNQUOTE WHO WOULD HAVE OVERALL RESPONSIBILITIES RELATING TO THE BASQUE AREA.

6. REGARDING AMNESTY OREJA INDICATED THAT ALTHOUGH THERE MIGHT NOT BE A NEW AMNESTY, ARRANGEMENTS WOULD BE MADE TO CONTINUE TO RELEASE PRISONERS UNDER THE INVOLVED IN "CRIMES OF BLOOD".STABLER

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